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African Regional Experts Group Meeting
on Domestic and Intra-African Trade

Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) 9-13 November 1987

LC/NAIROBI

AIDE-MEMOIRE OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL EXPERTS GROUP MEETING ON DOMESTIC AND INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE (9 to 13 NOVEMBER 1987)

I. BACKGROUND

1. An African Regional Expert Group Meeting on Domestic and Intra-African Trade is planned to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 9 to 13 November 1987. As a background to this meeting, it will be recalled that, in the field of trade, the Lagos Plan of Action accorded the highest priority to the expansion of domestic and intra-African trade in an endeavour to restructure Africa's externally oriented trade pattern to one based on the full exploitation of her human and natural resources. This approach was predicated upon a strategy of collective self reliance among the African countries for the economic development of the continent.

2. The meeting will be convened against the background that despite the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action, progress towards the expansion of domestic and intra-African trade has been slow. The African countries have expressed their concern, at a number of meetings and conferences about the continued low level of domestic and intra-African trade. They, therefore, have proposed a number of measures aiming inter-alia at increasing intra-African trade to 10 per cent of Africa's total trade 1/ and called on ECA to publish all resolutions and decisions taken by the Conference of African Ministers of Trade 2/ to promote domestic and intra-African trade.

3. In its Resolution 588(XXI) on Trade and Development Finance, the ECA Conference of Ministers at its meeting held in April 1986 noted, among other things, that the development and expansion of domestic and intra-African trade continued to be accorded low priority in the national development plans of many African countries. The Conference therefore appealed to member States:

(i) to intensify their efforts to explore new opportunities for domestic trade expansion and to adopt new policies so as to promote the production, marketing and distribution of locally produced goods, especially agricultural products, including food, within each member State as a top priority policy option for attaining national self-reliance;

(ii) to accord greater priority to measures for increasing intra-African trade, especially in cereals and other commodities identified in the Lagos Plan of Action, namely rice, coffee, tea, maize, sorghum, wheat, pulses, sugar, meat, fish, oil-seeds and vegetable oils, to 10 per cent of Africa's total trade by the year 1995 and to reduce and eventually remove tariff and non-tariff barriers to intra-African trade and effectively promote intra-African trade in industrial products.

1/ Report of the Eight Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Trade (Doc. E/ECA/OAU/TRADE/33) dated 31 October 1985.

2/ Report of the Conference of African Ministers of Trade (Doc. E/ECA/OAU/Trade/33) dated 27 March 1987.

4. Africa's priority programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990(APPER) adopted by the African Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in July 1985 and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 (UNPAAERD) adopted by the Thirteenth Special Session of the General Assembly in June 1986, further stressed the need to expand domestic and intra-African trade as part of the measures for Africa's economic recovery and accelerated growth. The objective of these programmes is to assist the African countries in dealing with the present economic crisis and to lay down the basis for long-term economic growth and development.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

5. The meeting will review the studies and reports, proposals adopted by member countries during the past five years with a view to finding out what actions have been initiated to implement these decisions. On the basis of such review, the meeting will propose measures on specific priority areas in domestic and intra-African trade drawn from the Lagos Plan of Action which would facilitate the implementation of APPER and UNPAAERD. The objectives of the meeting are threefold:

(i) To review the major decisions taken over the past five years or so on the expansion of domestic and intra-African trade and what action has been taken on them;

(ii) To identify critical problems and obstacles in the implementation of these decisions and review the root causes and obstacles to the expansion and development of intra-African trade;

(iii) To propose a new set of realistic and practical proposals to enhance the contribution of domestic and intra-African trade to Africa's economic development and more particularly to ensure that such trade becomes «the engine» for re recovery and growth within the context of APPER and UNPAAERD.

III. PARTICIPATION

6. Participation at the meeting will be at the highest level of senior government officials in the Ministries of Trade and Economic Development and Planning directly dealing domestic and intra-African trade issues. Participants should adequately prepare country notes to enable them to contribute effectively to the discussions and in finding practical and effective solutions to the problems of domestic and intra-African trade.

IV. EXPECTED RESULTS

7. The following are the results expected from the meeting:

(a) In the field of domestic trade, it is expected that the meeting will adopt a set of practical recommendations for implementation by member countries for a more effective contribution of the domestic sector to their economic development and a faster integration of the rural sector in the monetary economy.

(b) With regard to intra-African trade expansion, the meeting is expected to adopt proposals which would enhance intra-African trade both within the existing subregional groupings as well as among them. Such recommendations would also emphasize the need to restructure the African economies and their production and trade patterns away from an externally oriented focus to one which aims to meet the real needs of the African populations.

(c) On border trade issues, the meeting will be expected to propose concrete measures to be applied by member countries which should, in the long term, bring about a more effective control of illegal trade and promote trade through the normal official channels.

V. DOCUMENTATION

8. The meeting will have before it the following main papers dealing with the major issues of domestic and intra-African trade:

(1) The Structure of domestic trade- a synthesis of five case studies in Africa (Doc. E/ECA/TRADE/84)

(2) The development and expansion of Domestic and intra-African trade - a Policy Paper (Doc. E/ECA/TRADE/85)

(3) Border Trade Issues in Africa - A Preliminary Study (Doc. E/ECA/TRADE/86)

9. Other background documents on domestic and intra-African trade will also be distributed.

VI. COST OF ATTENDANCE

10. The cost of attendance at this meeting (travel and subsistence allowance) will be borne by the governments concerned. ECA will meet the organization costs of the meeting.